

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA



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Selected Writings

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The Way of Maha Ati

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THE ALAYA

THE GROUND of samsara and nirvana, the beginning and end of both confusion and realization, the nature of universal shunyata and of all apparent phenomena, more fundamental even than the trikaya because it is free from bias toward enlightenment, is the alaya, sometimes called the pure or original mind.

Although prajna sees in it no basis for such concepts as different aspects, yet three fundamental aspects of complete openness, natural perfection, and absolute spontaneity are distinguished by upaya as useful devices.

COMPLETE OPENNESS

All aspects of every phenomenon are completely clear and lucid.

The whole universe is open and unobstructed, everything mutually interpenetrating.

Since all things are naked, clear, and free from obscurations, there is nothing to attain or to realize. The nature of things naturally appears and is naturally present in time-transcending awareness.

The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions and to all people, experiencing

everything totally without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes onto oneself.

This produces a tremendous energy which is usually locked up in the processes of mental evasion and generally running away from life experiences.

Clarity of awareness may in its initial stages be unpleasant or fear inspiring. If so, then one should open oneself completely to the pain or the fear and welcome it. In this way the barriers created by one's own habitual emotional reactions and prejudices are broken down.

When performing the meditation practice one should get the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind, ridding oneself of all "protecting" barriers.

Don't mentally split in two when meditating, one part of the mind watching the other like a cat watching a mouse.

One should realize that one does not meditate in order to go deeply into oneself and withdraw from the world.

Even when meditating on chakras in Buddhist yoga there is no introspective concentration—complete openness of mind is still the keynote.

NATURAL PERFECTION

Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled.

All phenomena naturally appear in their uniquely correct modes and situations, forming ever-changing patterns full of meaning and significance, like participants in a great dance.

Everything is symbol, yet there is no difference between the symbol and the truth symbolized.

With no effort or practice whatsoever liberation, enlightenment, and buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected.

The everyday practice is just ordinary life itself. Since the underdeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or to try to attain or practice anything.

There should be no feeling of striving to reach some exalted goal or higher state, since this simply produces something conditioned and artificial that will act as an obstruction to the free flow of the mind.

One should never think of oneself as "sinful" or worthless, but as naturally pure and perfect, lacking nothing.

When performing meditation practice one should think of it as just a natural function of everyday life, like eating or breathing, not as a special, formal event to be undertaken with great seriousness and solemnity. One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals, and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation.

Meditation is always perfect, so there is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of the mind, there are no bad meditation sessions and no need to judge thoughts as good or evil. Therefore one should not sit down to meditate with various hopes and fears about the outcome—one just does it, with no self-conscious feeling of "I am meditating," without effort, without strain, without attempting to control or force the mind, without trying to become peaceful.

If one finds one is going astray in any of these ways, stop meditating and simply rest and relax for a while before resuming.

If one has experiences that one interprets as "results," either during or after meditation, do not make anything special of them, but just observe them as phenomena. Above all, do not attempt to repeat them, since this opposes the natural spontaneity of the mind.

ABSOLUTE SPONTANEITY

All phenomena are completely new and fresh, absolutely unique at the instant of their appearance and entirely free from all concepts of past, present, and future, as if experienced in another dimension of time.

The continual stream of new discovery and fresh revelation and inspiration which arises at every moment is the manifestation of the eternal youth of the living dharma and its wonder, splendor, and spontaneity are the play or dance aspect of the universe as guru.

Learn to see everyday life as a mandala in which one is at the center, and be free of the bias and prejudice of past conditioning, present desires, and future hopes and expectations.

The figures of the mandala are the day-to-day objects of one's life experience, moving in the great dance or play of the universe, the symbolism by which the guru reveals profound and ultimate meaning and significance. Therefore be natural and spontaneous, accept and learn from everything.

See the ironic, amusing side of irritating situations.

In meditation see through the illusion of past, present, and future. The past is but a present memory or condition, the future a present projection, and the present itself vanishes before it can be grasped.

Free oneself from past memories of, and conceptions about, meditation. Each moment of meditation is completely unique and full of the potentiality of new discovery, so one is incapable of judging meditation by past sessions or by theory.

Just plunge straight into meditation at this very moment with one's whole mind and be free from hesitation, boredom, or excitement.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

It is traditional, and best if possible, to sit cross-legged when meditating, with the back erect but not rigid. However, it is most important to feel comfortable, so it is better to sit in a chair if sitting cross-legged proves painful.

One's attitude of mind should be inspired by the three fundamental aspects, whether the meditation is with or without form, although in the latter case the three aspects constitute the whole meditation itself, with particular emphasis on complete openness.

Meditations with form are preceded by, followed by, and contain periods without form and similarly it may often prove desirable, if not essential, to precede a period of formless meditation by a period with form.

To provide for this eventuality many preliminary meditations have been developed over the centuries of Buddhist practice, the most important classes being meditations on breathing, mantra repetitions, and visualizations.

The second and third of these classes need personal instruction from

one's guru before they can be attempted, but a few words on the first would not be out of place here, since the method used varies little from person to person.

First, let the mind follow the in-and-out rhythm of the breath until it becomes calm and tranquil; then rest the mind more and more on the breath until one's whole being seems to be identified with it.

Finally, become aware of the breath leaving the body and going out into space and gradually transfer the attention away from the breath and toward the sensation of spaciousness and expansion.

By letting this final sensation merge into complete openness, one moves into the sphere of formless meditation proper.

In all probability the above descriptions of the three fundamental aspects and the meditation practices involved will seem very vague and inadequate.

This is inevitable since they attempt to describe what is not only beyond words but beyond thought, and invite practice of what is essentially a state of being.

The words are simply a form of upaya (i.e., skill in means), a hint, which if acted upon may enable the innate natural wisdom and the naturally perfect action to arise spontaneously.

Sometimes in meditation there is a gap in normal consciousness, a sudden complete openness.

This only arises when one has ceased to think in terms of meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. It is a glimpse of reality, a sudden flash which occurs at first infrequently and then gradually more and more often. It may not be a particularly shattering or explosive experience at all, just a moment of great simplicity.

Do not make the mistake of deliberately trying to force these experiences to recur, for this is to betray the naturalness and spontaneity of reality.